

# THE DEFENCE OF Conny-catching OR

A CONFUTATION OF THOSE  
two iniurious Pamphlets published by R.G. against  
the practitioners of many Nimble-witted  
and mysticall Sciences.

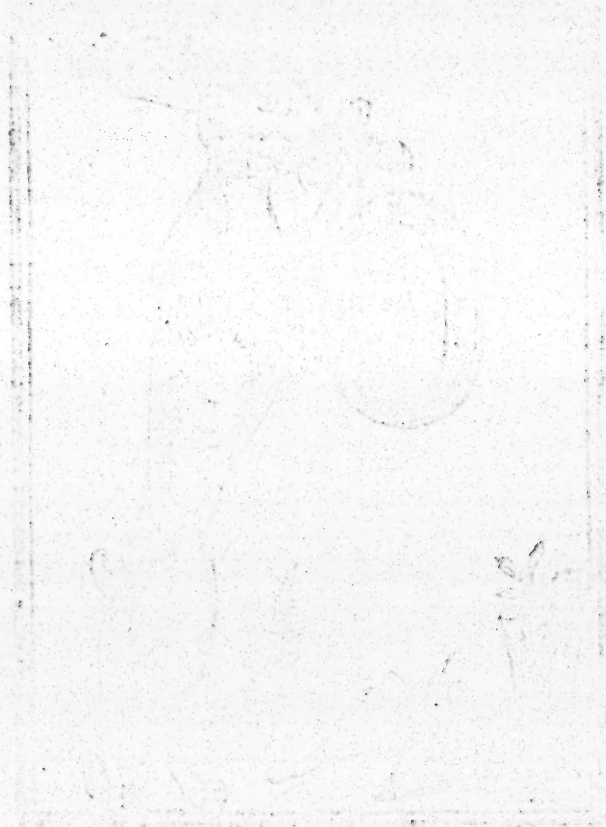
By Cuthbert Cunny-catcher, Licenciate in Whit-  
tington Colledge.

*Qui bene latuit bene vixit, dominatur enim  
fraus in omnibus.*



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To all my good frends  
health.



**A** Plato (my good friendes) trauelled from Athens to Aegypt, and from thence through sundry clymes to increase his knowledge: so I as desirous as hee to search the deapth of those liberall Artes wherein I was a professour, leste my studie in *Whittington Colledge*, & tra-  
ced the country to grow famous in my facultie, so that I was so expert in the *Art of Cony-catching* by my continuall practise, that that learned Philosopher *Iacke Cuttes*, whose deepe insight into this science had drawn him thrise through euery gaole in England, meeting of mee at *Maidstone*, gaue mee the bucklers, as the subtlest that euer he sawe in that quaint and mysticall forme of Foolosophie: for if euer I brought my Conny but to crush a pottle of ale with mee, I was as sure of all the crownes in his purse, as if hee had conueyed them into my proper possession by a deede of gifte with his owne hande.

At *Dequoy*, *Mumchaunce*, *Catch-dolt*, *Oure le bourse*, *Non est possible*, *Dutch Noddie*, or *Irish one and thirtie*, none durst euer make compare with me for excellence: but as so many heades so many wits, so some that would

Newgate  
buylded by  
one Whit-  
tington.

The names  
of suche  
games as  
Connycat-  
chers vse.

# To the Readers

Althemo-  
nie in their  
purse.

not stoope a farthing at cardes, would venter all the  
byte in their bagg at dice. Therefore had I cheates for  
the very life, of the squariers, langrets, gourds, stoppe-  
dice, high-men, low-men, and dice barde for all ad-  
uantages: that if I fetcht in anie nouyce eyther at ta-  
bles, or anie other game of hazard, I would bee sure  
to strippe him of all that his purse had in Esse, or his  
credyt in Posse, ere the simple Connie and I parted.

When neyther of these would serue, I had consorts  
that could verse, nippe, and soyst, so that I had a super-  
ficiall sight into euery profitable facultie. Infomuch  
that my principles grew authenticall, and I so famous,  
that had I not beene crost by those two peeuish Pam-  
phlets, I might at the nexte Midsummer haue worne  
Doct<sup>r</sup> Stories cappe for a fauor. For I trauelled almost  
throughout all England, admired for my ingenious ca-  
pacitie: till comming about Exceter, I began to exer-  
cise my art, and drawing in a Tanner for a tame Conic,  
assoon as he had lost two shillings he made this replie.

Some Co-  
niccatchers  
dare weare  
noblemens  
liueryes, as  
W. Bicker-  
ton and o-  
thers.

Sirha, although you haue a liuery on your backe, and a  
cognisance to countenance you withall, and beare the  
port of a Gentleman, yet I see you are a false knaue and  
a Conny-catcher, and this your companion your setter,  
and that before you and I part Ile prone.

At these wordes Conny-catcher and Setter, I was  
driuen into as great a maze, as if one had dropt out of  
the clouds, to heare a pefant cant the wordes of art be-  
lōging to our trade: yet I set a good face on the matter  
and asked him what he ment by Cony-catching. Marry  
(q. he) althogh it is your practise, yet I haue for 3. pence  
bought a litle Pamphlet, that hath taught me to smoke  
such a couple of knaues as you be. When I heard him  
talke of smoaking, my heart waxed cold, and I began to  
gather into him gently. No no sir (q. he) you cā not verse  
vpon me, this booke hath taught me to beware of crof-  
biting:

## To the Readers

biting: And so to be breefe he vsed me curteously, and that night cauld the Constable to lodge mee in prison, & the nexte morning I was carried before the Iustice, where likewise he had this cursed booke of Conycatching, so that hee could tel the secretes of mine art better then my selfe: whereupon after strict examination I was sent to the gaole, & at the Sessions by good hap & some friend that my money procured mee, I was deliuered. Asloone as I was at liberty, I got one of these bookes, & began to tolle it ouer very deuoutly, wherein I found one art so perfectly anotomized, as if he had bene practitioner in our facultie forty winters before: then with a deepe sigh I began to curse this R. G. that had made a publike spoyle of so noble a science, and to exclaime against that palpable asse whosoever, that would make any pen-man priuy to our secret sciences. But see the sequel, I smothered my sorrowe in silence, and away I trudged out of Deuonshire, & went towards Cornwall, & comming to a simple Ale-house to lodge, I found at a square table hard by the fire halfe a doozen countrie Farmars at cardes. The sight of these penny-fathers at play, draue me straight into a pleasant passion, to blesse fortune that had offred such sweet opportunity to exercise my wits, & fil my purse with crowns: for I counted all the mony they had, mine by proper interest. As thus I stood looking on them playing at crof-ruffe, one was taken reuoking, whereat the other said, what neighbour wil you play the cony-catcher with vs: no no, wee haue read the booke as wel as you. Neuer went a cup of small beare so sorowfully down an Ale-knights belly in a frosty morning, as that word stroke to my hart, so that for feare o' trouble I was faine to try my good hap at square play, at which fortune fauoring mee, I wan twenty shillings, and yet doe as simply as I could, I was not onelie suspected, but called Conny-catcher and crosse-biter.



## To the Readers

But away I went with the money, and came presently to London, where I no sooner arrived amongst the crue, but I heard of a second parte worse then the first, which drew mee into such a great choller, that I began to enquire what this *R. G.* should bee. At last I learned that hee was a scholler, and a Maister of Artes, and a Conny-catcher in his kinde, though not at cards, and one that favoured good fellowes, so they were not palpable offenders in such desperate lawes: wherevpon reading his bookes, and surveying euery line with deepe iudgement, I began to note folly in the man, that would straine a Gnat, and lette passe an Elephant: that would touch small scapes, and lette grosse faulces passe without any reprehension. Insomuch that I resolved to make an Apologie, and to aunswere his libellous inuectiues, and to proue that we Conny-catchers are like little flies in the grasse, which liue: or little leaues and doe no more more harme: whereas there be in England other professions that bee great Conny-catchers and caterpillers, that make barraine the field where in they baite.

Therefore all my good friends vouch of my paines, and pray for my proceedings, for I meane to haue about with this *R. G.* and to giue him such a veny, that he shal be afraid heereafter to disparage that mysticall science of Conny-catching: if not, and that I proue too weake for him in sophistrie, I meane to borrowe *Will Bickertons* blade, of as good a temper as *Morglay King Arthures* sword was, and so challenge him to the single combat: But desirous to ende the quarrell with the penne if it be possible, heare what I haue learned in *Whittington Colledge*.

*Tours in cardes and dice*  
Cuthbert cony-catcher.

The





## THE DEFENCE OF Conny-catching.

**N** Cannot but wonder Maister R. G. what poeticall furie made you so fantasticke, as to wyte agaynst Conny-catchers: Was your brain so barraine that you had no other subiect: or your wittes so dyed with dreameing of loue pamphlets, that you had no other humoure left, but satirically with Diogenes to snarle at all mens manners: you neuer found in Tully nor Aristotle, what a setter of a verser was.

It had beene the part of a Scholler, to haue written seriously of some graue subiecte, whether philosophically to haue shewen how you were proficient in Cambridge, or vniuinely to haue manifested your religion to the world. Such triuiall trinkets and threedbare trash had better seemed T. D. whose braines beaten to the parking vp of Ballades, might more lawfully haue glaunst at the quaint conceits of Conny-catching and Crosse-biting.

But to this my objection he thinks I beare your masship learnedly reply, Naseimur pro patria: Euery man is not borne for himselfe, but for his country: and that the ende of all studious induozs ought to rende to the aduancing of vertue, or suppressing of vice in the common-wealth. So that you haue heerein doone the parte of a good subiect, and

# The defence of

a good scholler, to anotomize such secrete villainies as are practised by roostening companions to the ouerthrow of the simple people: for by the discouery of such pernicious lawes you seeke to roote out of the common-wealth such ill and licentious liuing persons, as doe *Ex alieno succo vinere*, lyue of the sweat of other mens browes, and vnder subtil shifts of witte abused, seeke to ruine the flourishing estate of England. These you call vipers, moathes of the common-wealth, caterpillers worse then God rayned downe on Egypt, rotten flesh which must be diuided from the hole.

*Ense refecandum est ne pars sincera trahatur.*

This Maister R. G. I know will be your answer, as it is the pretended cause of your iniurious pamphlets. And indeed it is very well doone, but greater had your praise bin if you had entred into the nature of moze grosse abuses, and set downe the particular enormities that grow fiō such palpable villanies. For truth it is, that this is the Iron age, wherein iniquitie hath the vpper hande, and all conditions and estates of men seeke to liue by their wittes, and hee is counted wisest, that hath the deepest insight into the getting of gaines: euery thing now that is found profitable, is counted honest and lawfull: and men are valued by their wealth, not by their vertues. He that cannot dissemble cannot lyue; and men put theiꝝ sonnes now a dayes apprentices, not to learne trades and occupations, but craftes and mysteries.

If then witte in this age be counted a great patrimony, and subletie an inseparable accident to all estates, why should you be so spitefull Maister R. G. to pooze Connycatchers aboue all the rest, sith they are the simplest soules of all in shifting to liue in this ouer wise world.

But you play like the spider that makes her webbe to intrappe and snare little flies, but weaues it so slenderly, that the great ones breake through without any dammage. You straine gnats, and passe ouer elephants; you scoure the

poude

## Cunny catching.

poude of a fewe croaking frogges, and leaue behinde an infinite number of most venomous Scorpions. You decypher pooze Conny-catchers, that perhappes with a tricke at cardes winne forty shillings from a churle that can spare it, and neuer talke of those Caterpillers that vndoo the pooze, ruine whole Lordships, infect the common-wealth, and delight in nothing but in wrongfull extorting and purloynning of pelfe, when as such be the greatest Connycatchers of all, as by your leaue Maister R. G. I wil make manifest.

Sir reuerence on your worshop, has you such a moete in your eye, that you could not see those fox-furd gentlemen that hide vnder their gownes faced with fopnes more false-hoode then all the Conny-catchers in England beside, those miserable Usurers (I meane) that like Vultures pray vpon the spoyle of the pooze, sleeping with his neighbours pledges all night in his bosome, and feeding vpon forfeites and penalties, as the rauens doe vpon carren? If his pooze neighbor want to supply his need, either for his household necessities, or his rent at the day, hee will not lende a peny for charitie, all his money is abroad: but if he offer him eyther cow or low, mare or horse, or the verie corne scarce sprotted out of the ground to sel, so the bargayne may be cheape, though to the beggerie of the pooze man, hee choppes with him straight, and makes the pooze Conny fare the worse all the yeare after. Why write you not of these Connycatchers Maister R. G.?

Besides if pawns come, as the lease of a house, or the fee simple in mortgage, he can out of his furd cassock draw mony to lend: but the old Cole hath such quirks and quiddities in the conueyance, such prouisoos, such dayes, howers nay minutes of payments, that if his neighbour breake but a moment, he takes the forsayte, and like a pinke-eyed ferret so clawes the pooze Conny in the burrow, that hee leaues no haire on his breach nor on his backe ere he partes with him.



Are not these vipers of the common-wealth, and to bee ex-  
claimde against, not in small Pamphlets, but in great vo-  
lumes?

You set downe how there bee requisite letters and ver-  
ters in Comp-catching, and be there not so I pray you in U-  
surie: for when a yooong youthfull Gentleman, giuen a litle  
to lash out liberally, wanteth monie: makes he not his monie  
first to the Broker, a knaue as subtrill to induce him to his o-  
uerthrow, as the wyldest Setter or Uerser in England: and  
he must be feede to speake to the Usurer, and haue so much  
in the pound for his labour: then hee shall haue graunt of  
money and commodities together, so that if hee borrowe a  
hundred pound, hee shall haue fortye in siluer, and threescore  
in wares, dead stuffe God wot: as lute stringes, hobby hor-  
ses, or (if hee bee greatly fauoured) browne paper or cloath,  
and that shootes out in the last. Then his land is turnde o-  
uer in Statute or recognizance for six monethes and sixe mo-  
neths, so that he payes some thirtie in the hundred to the U-  
surer, before the Scrivenner he hath a blind share: but when  
he comes to sell his threescore pound commodities, tis well  
if he get fure and thirtie.

Thus is the pooze gentleman made a meere and simple  
Comp, and verser vpon to the vttermost, and yet if he byake  
his day, loseth as much lande as cost his father a thousand  
markes,

Is not this roolledge and Comp-catching Maister R.  
G. and moze daily practised in England, and moze hurtfull  
then our pooze shifting at Cardes, and yet your masship can  
winke at the cause: they be wealthy, but Cuthbert Con-  
ny-catcher cares for none of them no more then they care  
for him, and therefore will reueale all. And because Maister  
R. G. you were pleasant in examples, Ie tel you a tale of an  
Usurer, done within a mile of a knaues heade, and since the  
Cuckow sung last, and it fel out thus.

A



A pleasant tale of an Usurer.



**I**f so tamed that a yong gentleman not far  
off from Cockermouth, was somewhat  
slip behind hande and growne in debt, so  
that he durst hardly shewe his head for feare  
of his creditors, and having wife and chil-  
dren to maintaine, although he had a proper  
lande, yet wanting money to stocke his ground, he liued ve-  
rie bate: whercupon he determined with himselfe to goe to  
an olde penny-father that dwelt hard by him, and to borrowe  
some moncy of him, and so to lay his lande in mortgage for  
the repayment of it.

He no sooner made the motion but it was accepted, for  
it was a goodly Lordship, worth in rent of assise seven score  
pound by the yeere, and did abbut vpon the Usurers ground,  
which drew the olde churle to bee marvellous willing to dis-  
burse money, so that hee was content to lende him two hun-  
dred markes for thre yeere according to the statute, so that  
he might haue the land for assurance of his moncy.

The gentleman agreed to that, and promised to acknow-  
ledge a statute staple to him, with letters of deseylance. The  
Usurer (although he likt this wel, and sawe the yong man  
offered more then reason required) yet had a further fetch to  
haue the land his whatsoeuer should chaunce, and therefore  
he began to verse vpon the poore Conny thus.

Sir (quoth hee) if I did not pittie your estate, I would  
not lend you my money at such a rate: for whereas you haue  
it after ten pounds in the hundred, I can make it worth thir-  
tie. But seeing the distresse you your wife and children are  
in, and considering all growes through your owne liberall  
nature, I compassionate you the more, and would doe for  
you as for mine owne soune: therfore if you shal thinke good  
to followe it, I wil giue you fatherly advise.

I knowe you are greatly indebted, and haue many vnmisericifull creditors, and they haue you in suite, and I doubt ere long wil haue some extent against your landes, so shall you be vtterly vndone, and I greatly incumbered. Therefore to auoyd all this, in my iudgement it were best for you to make a deed of gift of all your landes, without condition or promise, to some one faythfull friend or other, in whom you may repose credite, so shal your enemies haue no aduantage against you: and seeing they shal haue nothing but your bare body liable to their executions, they wil take the more easie and speedie composition. I thinke this the surest way, and if you durst repose your selfe in mee, God is my witnes, I would bee to you as your Father if hee liued: How say you to this compendious tale Maister R. G. could the proudest letter or verser in the worlde haue drabone on a Connie more cunningly?

Wel, againe to our yong gentleman, who simply (with teares in his eyes to heare the kindnes of the Usurer) thanked him hartily, & referred not to put in practise his counsell, for he made an absolute deed of gifte from wife and children to this Usurer of all his Lordship, and so had the two hundred markes vpon the playne forfait of a band.

To be short, the money made him and his merry, & yet he did husband it so wel, that he not only duly paid the interest but Rocks his groundes, and began to grow out of debt, so that his creditors were willing to beare with him. Against the three yeares were expired, hee made shift by the helpe of his friends for the money, and carried it home to the Usurer, thanking him greatly, and crauing a returne of his deed of gifte. Nay lofe sir (saith the olde Churle) that bargaine is yet to make, the lande is mine to mee and mine heires for euer, by a deed of gift from your owne hande, and what can be more sure, take the money if you please, and there is your hande, but for the Lordshippe I will enter on it to morrow: yet if you will bee my tenaunt you shall haue it before

before an other, and that is all the favour you shall haue of mee.

At this the gentleman was amazed, and began to plead conscience with him, but in vaine: whereupon he went sorrowfully home, and tolde his wife, who as a woman halfe lunaticke ran with her little children to his house, and cryed out, but bootlesse: For although they called him before the chiefe of the cuntry, yet sith y<sup>e</sup> law had granted him the fee-simple thereof he would not part w<sup>th</sup> that: so that the distressed gentleman was faine to become tenant to this Usurer, and for two hundred marks to loose a Lordship worth six or seven thousand pounds. I pray you was not this an old Compy-catcher Maister R. G. that could lurtch a poore Countie of so many thousands at one time? whether is our crossing at cardes more perillous to the common-welch then this cosenage for land? you winkt at it, but I wil tel all, yet heare out the end of my tale, for as fortune fel out, the Usurer was made a Compy himselfe.

The gentleman and his wife smothering this with patience, he that had a reaching wit, or hairbrain reuenge in his head, counseld his husband to make a boyage from home, & to stay a weeke or two: and quoth she, before you come again you shal see mee venter faire for the lande. The gentleman willing to lette his wife practise his wits, went his way, and left all to his wifes discretion. She after his husband was foure or fise dayes from home, was visited by the vsurer, who vled hir very kindly, and sent victuals to his house, promising to suppe with hir that night, and that she should not want any thing in her husbands absence. The gentlewoman with gracious acceptance thankt him, and bad ouers of her neighboures to beare him company, hauing a further reach in her heade than hee suspected. For the olde Churle coming on hower before Supper time, such as she her selfe would wish, after an amorous weeke or two, as oulde Iades will wyndie when they cannot wagge the tayle, began



began to be very pleasant with his tenant, and desired her to shew him all the roomes in his house, and happilie (saith he) if I die without issue, I may giue it to your children, for my conscience bids me be fauorable to you.

The gentlewoman lead him through enery part, and at last brought him into a backe roome much like a back-house, where she said thus vnto him.

Sir, this roome is the most vnhandsommet in all the house, but if there were a doornat built to it, and these shutte windowes made bay windowes and glazd, it would make the properest parlour in all the house: for (saith she) put your head out at this window, and looke what a sweet prospect belongs to it.

The Usurer mistrusting nothing, thrust out his craftie sconce, and the gentlewoman shut to the windowe, and called her maydes to helpe, where they bound and pinyond the caterpillers armes fast, and then stoode he with his head into a backe yard, as if he had bene on a pillorie, and struggle he durst not for stilling himselfe. When shee had him thus at the vantage, she got a couple of slippeny naies and a hammer, and went into the yard, hauing her children attending vpon her, euery one with a sharpe knife in their handes, and then comming to him with a sterne countenance, she looked as Medea did when shee attempted reuenge against Iason. The Usurer seeing this tragedie, was afrayd of his life, and cryed out, but in vaine, for her maydes made such a noyse, that his shriking could not be heard, whilst shee nayled one eare fast to the windowe, and the other to the flimsyell, then began she to vse these words vnto him.

Oh vile and inuious caterpillar, God hath sent thee to seeke thine owne reuenge, and nowe I and my children will perforce it. For such thy wealth doth so countenance thee, that we cannot haue thee punisht for thy coolsenage; I my selfe will be Iustice, Iudge, and executioner: for as the pillorie belonges for such a villaine, so haue I nayled thy eares  
and



## Cunny catching.

and they shall bee cut off to the perpetuall example of such  
prolonging reprobates, and the executors shall be these little  
infantes whose right without conscience or mercy thou so  
wrongfully deteynest. Looke on this olde churle, little babes  
this is he that with his cosinage wil driue you to begge and  
want in your age, and at this instant brings your father to  
all this present miserie, haue no pitie vpon him, but you two  
cut off his eares, and thou quoth shee to the eldest cut off his  
nose, and so be reuenged on the villaine whatsoeuer fortune  
me for my labour, at this the Usurer cryed out and bad her  
staie her children, and hee would restore the house and lande  
again to her husband. I cannot beleue thee base churl quoth  
shee, for thou that wouldst periure thy selfe against so honest  
a Gentleman as my husband, wil not sticke to forswear thy  
selfe were thou at libertie, and therefore I wil mangle thee  
to the vtterance, as thus she was ready to haue the children  
fall vpon him, one of her maydes came running in and tolde  
her, her neighbours were come to supper, bid them come in  
quoth shee, and beholde this spectacle, although the Usurer  
was passing loth to haue his neighbours see him thus tran-  
siously vled, yet in they came, and when they sawe him thus  
manerly in a new made Pillory, and his eares fast naylde,  
some wondred, some laught, and all stood amaze, till the  
Gentlewoman discoursed vnto them all the cosinage, and how  
she went to be reuenged: some of them perswaded her to let  
him go, others were silent, and some bad him confesse, hee  
hearing them debate the matter, and not to offer to helpe  
him, cryed out, why and stand you staring on me neighbours,  
and wil not you saue my life? no quoth the Gentlewoman,  
he or she that stirs to helpe thee shall pay dearly for it, and  
therefore my boyes of with his eares, then he cryed out, but  
staie, and he would confesse all, when from point to point he  
reheard how hee had cosoned her husband by a deed of gift  
only made to him in trust, and there was content to giue him  
the two hundred marks freely for amendes, and to paye by

C

before

## The defence of

before any men of worship the land againe into his possession, and vpon that hee had them all beare witnesse, then the Gentlewoman let loose his eares, and let slip his head, and away went he home with his bloody lugges and tarried not to take part of the meate he had sent, but the Gentlewoman and her neighbours, and laught hartily at the vsage of the vsurer, the next day it was bruted abroad, and came to the eares of the worshipful of the Country, who sat in commission vpon it, and founde out the cosanage of the vsurer, so they praised the wit of the Gentlewoman, restored her husband to the land, and the old churle in discredit and a laughing stocke to all the country, all his life after.

I pray you what say you to Housler the Miller, with the guilden thumbe, whether thinke you him a Cunny-catcher or no, that robs euery pooze man of his meale and corn, and takes towle at his owne pleasure, how many Conyes doth he take vp in a yeare, for when they bring him wheate to the Mill, he selles them meale of their owne corne againe in the market. I omit Miles the Millers cosanage for wenching affaires, as no doubt in these causes they bee mightie Cony-catchers, and meane to speake of their pollicie in filching and stealing of meale. For you must note, that our iolly Miller doth not only verse vpon the pooze and rich for their towle, but hath false hoppers conueyed vnder the fall of his Mill, where all the best of the meale runnes by, this is, if the partie by that bringeth the corne, but because many men haue many eyes, the Miller wil driue them of for their griefe for a day or two, and then he plaies his pranches at his owne pleasure, I neede not tell that stole iest of the Gentlemans Miller that kept Court and Leete once euery weeke, and vsed to set in euery sacke a candle, and so summon the owners to appeare by their names, if they came not as they were farre inough from that place, then he amerced them, and so tooke treple towle of euery sacke, one night amongst the rest, the Gentleman his maister was vnder the Mill,

## Cunny catching.

Mill, and heard all his knauery, how euery one was called and paide his amerciment, at last hee heard his owne name called, and then stepping vp the Ladder, he had staie for hee was there to make his appearance. I doo imagine that the Miller was blancke, and perhaps his maister called him knaue, but the fore, the more he is curst the better he fares, & the oftener the Miller is called theefe, the richer he war-eth: and therefore do men rightly by a by word bid the Miller put out, and if he asketh what, they say a Theeues head and a Theeues paire of eares, for such graund Cony-catchers are these Millers, that hee that cannot verse vppon a pooze mans sacke, is sayd to be born with a golden thombe, but yet you may see more evidently their knauery.

Ile tell you a pleasaunt Tale performed not many yeares since by a Miller in Enfield Mill, ten myles from London, and an Alewiues Boy of Edmondton, but because they are all at this present aliue, I will conceale their names, but thus it fell out.



# The defence of

## A pleasant Tale of a Miller and an Alewiues Boy of Edmundton.



An Alewife of Edmundton, who had a great vent for spiced Cakes, sent her some often to Endfield Mill for to haue her wheate grinde, so that the Boy who was of a quicke spirite and rype witte, grew very familiar both with the Miller and his man, and could get his corne sooner put the Mill then any Boy in the country beside. It fortunied on a time, that this goodwife wanting nieale, had her Boy hie to the Mill, and be at home that night without faile, for shee had not a pinte of flour in the house. Iacke her sonne for so we wil call his name, laies his sacke on his Hares backe and away hee rydes singing towards Enfield, as he rood, he met at the washes with the Miller, and gaue him the time of the day, Godfather quoth he, whither ryde you, to London Iacke quoth the Miller, oh good father quoth the Boy, tel mee what store of grieff is there at the mill, marry great store quoth the Miller, but Iacke if thou wilt doo me an arrant to my man, ile send thee by a token that thou shalt haue thy corne cast en and ground assoone as thou comnest, yle say and doo what you wil to bee dispatcht, for my mother hath neyther Cakes nor flour at home, then Iacke laies the Miller, bid my man grinde thy corne next, by that token he looke to my Bitch and feede her wel, I wil Godfather laies the Boy and rydes his way, and marueiled with himselfe what Bitch it was, the Miller bid his man feede, considering for two or thre yeares hee had vsde to the Mill and neuer saw a Dog nor Bitch but a little pyicke carde Shauld that kept the Mill dooze, ryding thus musing with himselfe, at last he came to Endfield, and there had his corne wound by, assoone as he came by the stagers,  
the



the Millers man being half sleepe began to aske Jacke brow-  
sily what newes, marry quoth the Boy the Newes is this,  
that I must haue my corne laide on next, soft Jacke quoth  
the millers man, your turne wil not come afoze midnight,  
but ye are alwaies in hast, soft fire makes sweet mault, your  
betters shalbe serued afoze you this time, not so quoth the  
Boy, for I met my Godfather at the walbes ryding to Lon-  
don, and tolde him what hast I had, and so bids my griest  
shalbe layd on next, by that token you must looke to his bitch  
and feede her wel: at that the millers man smilde, and sayd,  
he should be the next, and so riste vp and turnd a pinne behind  
the Hopper. Jacke markt all this, and heeing a willy and a  
witty Boy, marueiled where this Bitch should be, and see-  
ing none, began to suspect some knauery, and therefore be-  
ing very familiar, was bolde to looke about in euery corner,  
while the man was busie about the Hopper, at last Jacke  
turning vp a cloth that hung before the Trough, spied vnder  
the hopper below, where a great Poake was tyed with a cord  
almost ful of fine floure, that ran at a false hole vnderneath,  
and could not be spied by any meanes, Jacke seeing this, be-  
gan to suspect this was the Millers Bitch that he comman-  
ded his man to feed, and so smiled & let it alone: at last when  
the corne was ground off that was in the hopper, Jacke layd  
on his, and was very busie about it himselfe, so that the Mil-  
lers man set him downe and tooke a nap, knowing the Boy  
could looke to the mill almost as wel as himselfe, Jacke all  
this while had an eye to the Bitch, and determined at last to  
slipt her haulter, which hee warily perfozmed, for when his  
corne was ground and he had put vp his meale, he whipt a-  
sunder the cord with his knife that held the poake, and thrust  
it into the mouth of his sacke, now there was in the poake a  
Bushel and more of pallyng fine floure that the Millers  
Bitch had eaten that day, as soone as Jacke had tyed vp his  
sacke, there was striving who should laye on corne next, so  
that the Millers man wakke, and Jacke desiring one to help  
him

bin by with his coine, tooke his leaue and went his way, ryding merely homeward, smiling to thinke how hee had coloned the Miller, as he roade, at that same place where hee mette the Miller outwarde, hee mette him homeward, Now now Iacke quoth the Miller haste grounde, I, I thancke you Godfather quoth the Boye, but didst remember my arrant to my man sayes hee, didst bid him looke to my Bitch well, Oh Godfather quoth the Boy, take no care for your Bitch shee is well, for I haue her here in my sacke Whelpes and all, away rydes Iacke at this laughing, and the Miller greecupng, but when he founde it true, I leaue you to gesse howe hee and his man dealt together, but howe the Alewife sported at the knauerye of her sonne when hee tolde her all the least, that imagine, but howe soeuer for all that, Iacke was euer welcome to the Myll and grounde before anye, and whose soeuer sacke fedde the Bitch, Iackes scape euer toyle free, that hee might conceale the Millers subtiltie.

Was not this Myller a Conny-catcher maister R. G? What should I talke of the baser sort of men, whose occupation cannot be vpholden without craft, there is no mystery nor science almost, wherein a man may thriue, without it be lincked to this famous Art of Conny-catching. The Alewife vnlesse she nicke her Pottes and Conny-catch her guestes with stone Pottes and petty Cannes, can hardly pay her Brewer, nay and yet that wil not serue, the chalke must walke walke to set by now and then a Shilling or two too much, or els the rent wil not be aunswered at the quarter day, besides ostrey, faggots, and faire chambring, and pretty wenches that haue no wages, but what they get by making of beddes. I knowe some Taphouses about the Subberbes, where they buy a shoulder of mutton for two groates, and sell it to their ghest for two shillings, and yet haue no female friendes to sup withall, let such take heede,  
least

## Conny-catching.

least my fathers white Horse loose saddle and bridle and they go on foote to the diuel on pilgrimage. Tush maister R. G. God is my witnesse, I haue seene Chaunlers about London, haue two paire of waytes, and when the searchers come, they shew them those that are sealed, but when their pooze neighbors buy ware, they vse them that lacke weight. I condemne not all, but let such amend as are toucht at the quicke. And is not this flat Conny-catching, yee, if it please your maship and woꝛser. Why the base sort of Dylers haue their shiftes, and the crue of Saint Patrickes Costermongers, can sel a simple man a crabbe for a pipping. And but that I haue loued wine wel, I would touch both the Vintner and his bush, for they haue such brewing and turning, such chopping and chainging, such mingling and mixing, what of wine with water in the quart Pot, and temperyng one wine with an other in the vessel, that it is hard to get a neate cup of wine and simple of it selfe, in most of our ordinary Tauernes, and do not they make pooze men Connies, that for their currant mony giue them tounterfeit wine.

What say you to the Butcher with his prickles, that hath policies to pufte vp his meate to please the eye, is not al his craft bled to draw the pooze Conny to ryd him of his ware. Hath not the Draper his darke shop to shadow the dye and wool of his cloth, and al to make the country Gentleman or Farmer a cony. What trade can maintaine his traffique? what science vphold it selfe? what man liue, vnlesse he grow into the nature of a cony-catcher? Doo not the Lawyers make long Pleaes, stand vppon their demurres, and haue their quirkes and quiddities to make his pooze client a cony? I speake not generally, for so they be the ministers of iustice, and the patrons of the pooze mens right, but particularly of such as hold gaines their God, and esteeme moze of coyne then of conscience. I remember by the way a merry iest perfoꝛmed by a ffoole, yet wittily hit home at hazard, as blind men shoote the crow.



A pleasant Tale of Will  
Sommers.



King Henry the eight of famous memorie,  
walking one day in his priuy Garden, with  
Will Sommers his Foole, it fortuneth that  
two Lawyers had a sute vnto his maiestie  
for one piece of ground that was almost out  
of lease and in the Kings gift, and at time  
put vp their Supplication to his highnesse, and at that instant  
one of the Pantry that had been a long seruicure, had spied  
out the same land, and exhibited his petition for the same gift,  
so that in one houre, all the three Supplications were giuen  
to the King, which his highnesse noting, and being as then  
pleasantly disposed, he reuealed it to them that were by him,  
how there were three Fishes at one bayt, and all gapt for a  
benefice, and he stood in doubt on whome to bestow it, and so  
shewed them the Supplications, the Courtiers spoke for  
their felow, except two that were feed by the Lawyers, and  
they particularly pleaded for their friendes, yeloping many  
reasons to the King on both sides. At last his maiestie sayd,  
hee would referre the matter to Will Sommers, which of  
them his Foole thought most woorthie of it should haue the  
lande. Will was glad of this, and loued him of the Pantry  
wel, and resolved he should haue the ground, but the Foole  
brought it about with prettie iest, Harry quoth he, what are  
these two Lawyers? I Will sayd the King, then quoth the  
Foole, I wil vse them as they vse their pooze Clients. Looke  
here quoth he, I haue a Walnut in my hand, & I will diuide  
it amongst the three, so Will crackt it, & gaue to one Lawier  
one shell, and to an other the other shell, and to him of the  
Pantry the meate, so shall thy gift be Harry, quoth hee, this  
Lawyer shall haue good Bookes, and this saire promises, but  
my fellow of the Pantry shall haue the land. For thus deale  
they

## Conny-catching.

they with theye Clyents, two men goe to two, and spende all that they haue vpon the Lawe, and at last, haue nothing but bare shales for theye labour. At this, the King and his Noble men laught: the Yeoman of the Pantry had the gift, and the Lawyers went home with fleas in their cares, by a soles verdict. I rehearse this tale to shew how men of Lawe, feede on poore mens purses, and makes their Country Clyents, oftentimes simple Connyers. But leauing these comon courses and triniall examples, I will shew you Pastier R. G. of a kinde of Conny-catchers, that as yet passeth all these.

There bee in England, but especially about London, certayne quaint, pickt, and neat companions, attyred in their apparell, eyther alla mode de Fraunce, with a side Cloake, and a hat of a high blocke and a broad brim, as if he could with hys head cosmographise the worlde in a moment, or else Allepanyole, with a strayght beintast steele like a quaille pipe, hys shorthe Cloake, and hys Rapier hanging as if he were entering the List to a desperate Combate: his beard squared with such Arte, eyther with his Mustachies after the lash of Lions, standing as stiffe as if he wore a Ruler in his mouth, or else nickt off with the Italian cut, as if hee ment to professe one sayth with the vpper lip, and an other with hys nether lippe, and then hee must bee Marquisaded, with a side peake pendant, eyther sharpe like the single of a Dære, or curtold lyke the broad ende of a Boule spade. This Gentleman forsooth, haunteth Tabling houses, Hauerns, and such places, where young nouices resort, and can fit hys humoꝝ to al companies, and openly shadoweth hys disguise with the name of a Traveller, so that hee will haue a superficiall insight into certaine phrases of euery language, & pronounce them in such a grace, as if almost he were that Countryman borne: then shall you heare him vaunt of hys trauels, and tell what wonders hee hath seene in strang Countryes: how he hath bene at Saint James of Compostella in Spaine, at Madrill in the Kings Court: and then drawing out his blade, hee clappes it on the boord, and sweares hee bought that in Toledo: then will hee rouse to Venice, and with a sigh, discover the situation of the

Cittie, how it is seated two Leagues from Terra frenia, in the Sea, and speake of Rialto Treviso and Murano, where they make glasses : and to set the younge Gentlemans teeth an edge, hee will make a longe tale of La Strado Courtizano, where the beautifull Curtizans dwell, describing theyr excellency, and what angellicall creatures they be, and how amorously they will entertaine strangers. Thus, he will discourse the state of Barbarie, and there to Eschites and Alcaires, and from thence leape to Fraunce, Denmarke and Germany, After all concluding thus.

What is a Gentleman (saith he) without trauaile : euen as a man without one eye. The sight of sundry Countreyes made Villes so famous : bought witte is the sweetest, and experience goeth beyonde all Patrymonies. Did young Gentlemen, as well as I, knowe the pleasure and profite of trauaile, they woulde not keepe them at home within their native continent : but visit the worlde, and win more wisdom in trauayling two or thre yeres, then all the wealth theyr Auncellours left them to possesse. Ah the swete sight of Ladies, the straunge wonders in Citties, and the dyuers manners of men and their conditions, were able to rauish a young Gentlemans senses, with the surfet of content, and what is a thousand pound spent to the obtaining of those pleasures.

All these Nouelties doth this pined Whagout boist on, when his onely trauaile hath beene to looke on a fayre day, from Douer Clifts to Callis, neuer having slept a wote out of England, but surueyed the Maps, & hearde others talke what they knewe by experience. Thus decking himselfe like the Dawe, with the fayre feathers of other Birdes, and discoursing what he heard other men report, he grewe so plausible among young Gentlemen, that he gotte his Ddenarie at the least, and many gracious thanks for hys labour. But happily some amongst many, tickled with the desire to see straunge Countreyes, and drawen on by hys alluring wordes, woulde ioyne with him & question if he ment euer to trauaile againe. He straight after hath bitten his peake by the ende, Alla Neapolitano begins thus to reply.



By, although a man of my trauaile & experience, might be satisfi'd in the sight of Countries, yet so insatiat is the delight of trauailing, that if perhaps a young Gentleman of a liberall and courteous nature, were desirous to see Ierusalem or Costantinople, would he well acquit my paynes and followe my counsaile, I would bestow a yere or two with him out of Englande. To be bræfe, if the Gentleman iumpe with him, then doth he cause him to sell some Lordshippe, and put some thousand or two thousand pound in the banck to bee receiued by letters of exchange: and because the Gentleman is ignorant, my young Master his guide, must haue the disposing of it: which he so well sets out that the pooze Gentleman neuer sees any retorne of his money after. Then must stoe of sutes of apparell bee bought, and well furnisht euery way: at last, he names a shyppe wherein they shall passe, and so downe to Grauesende they goe, and there hee leaues the young nouice, fleest of his money and woe begone, as farre from trauell as Miles the merry Cobler of Shorditch: that swoze hee would neuer trauaile further, then from his shoppe to the Alehouse. I pray you call you not these fine witted fellowes Conny-catchers, Master R. G.

But nowe Sir by your leaue a little, what if I shoulde proue you a Conny-catcher, Master R. G. would it not make you blush at the matter? He goe as nere to it, as the Fryer did to his Hostesse maide, when the Clarke of the parish toke him at Leuatem at midnight. Aske y<sup>e</sup> Quenes Players, if you solde them not Orlando Furioso, for twenty Nobles, & when they were in the Country, solde the same play to the Lord Admiralls men, for as much moze. Was not thys playne Conny-catching, gentle Master R. G?

But I heare when thys was obiected, that you made this excuse: that there was no moze fayth to be helde with Players, than with them that valued fayth at the price of a feather: for as they were Comædians to acte, so the actions of their liues were Camelcon lyke, that they were incertayne, variable, time-pleasers, men that measured honestie by profite, and that regarded theyr Authoys not by desert, but by

necessitie of time. If this may serue you for a shaddow, let me vse it for an excuse of our Card Conny-catching: for whē we make a Country Farmer with a full purse, a miserable miser, that eyther racks his Tennants rents, or sels his grayne in the Market at an vnreasonable rate: we holde it a deuotion to make him a Conny, in that he is a Catterpillar to others, and gets that by pilling and pouling of the poore, that we strip him of by sleight and agillity of wit.

Is not there here resident about London, a crew of terrible Hacksters in the habite of Gentlemen, well appareld, and yet some weare bootes for want of stockings, with a Locke woꝛne at their left eare, for their mistres fauour: his Rapier Alla reuolto, his Boynado pendent ready for the stab, & cauleuast, like a warlike Magnifico: yet for all this outward shew of pride, inwardly they be humble in mind, and despise worldly wealth, for you shall neuer take them with a penny in their purse. These Souldados, for vnder that profession most of them wander, haue a pollicie to scourge Alehouses, for where they light in, they neuer leap out, tyll they haue shewed their Arithmatique with chalk, on euery post in the house, figured in Cyphers like round Ds, tyll they make the goodman cry o, o, o, as if he should call an D yes at a Size or sessions. Now sir, they haue sundry shifts to maintain them in this versling, for either they creepe in with the goodwife, & so vndoo y goodman, or els they beare it out with great bzags if the Hoste be simple, or els they tryp him in some words when he is tipsy, that he hath spoken against some Justice of peace or other, or some other great man: and then they holde him at a Bay with that, till they make his backe almost bzeake. Thus shift they from house to house, hauing this Proverb amongst them. Such must eate as are hungry, and they must pay that haue money. Call you not these Conny-catchers, Maister R. G.

It were an endlesse pæce of woꝛk, to discouer the abhominable life of Broakers, whose shops are the very temples of the deuill, themselves his priests, and their bookes of account moze damnable, then the Alcoran set out by Mahomer: for as they

## Conny-catching.

they induce young Gentlemen to pawne their Lands, as I saide befoze : so they are ready ( the more is the pittie that it is suffered) to receiue any goods, holwe soeuer it bee come by, hauing their shoppes (as they say, a lawfull Market) to buye and sell in, so that whence growes so many Listes about London, but in that they haue Broakers their friendes, to buy what soeuer they purloine and steale. And yet is the Picklocke, Lister, or Hooker, that brings the stolne goods, made a flatte Conny, and bled as an Instrument onely of their villanie : for suppose he hath lifted a gowne, or a cloake, or so many parcelles as are worth ten poundes, and venters his life in hazard for the obtayning of it : the miserable Caterpillar the Broaker, will thinke hee dealeth liberally with him if he giue him forty shillings, so dooth he not onely maintayne felony, but like a theefe consens the theefe. And are not these graund Conny-catchers Maister R. G.

I knelwe, not farre from flete bridge, a Haberdasher, it were a good deepe to take Paine to tell his name, that tooke Paine. of a boy of seauen yeere olde, a Rapier worth forty shillings, and a sticht tassetie Hat worth ten, and all for five shillings : the Gentleman, father to the Childe, was sicke when necessity droue him thus nigh, to lay his weapon and his Bonnet to pawne, and as soone as he recouered, which was within sixe weekes after, sent the money and twelue pence for the loane, to haue the parcels againe. But this Cutthrotes aunswere was, the boy had made hym a bill of sale of hys hande for a moneth, and the day was broken, and hee had made his best of the Rapier and Hat. Was not this a lewe and a notable Conny-catcher Maister R. G.

A boy of  
vij yeeres  
old to make  
a byll of sale

It had bene well if you had roulde out your Kethoricke against such a rakehell. But come to their honest kinde of life, and you shall see holwe they stand vpon circunstaunces : if you borrowe but two shillings, there must bee a groat for the monney, and a groat for the bill of sale, and this must be renewed euery moneth : so that they resemble the box at dice, which being well payde all night, will in the morning be the greatest winner.



## The defence of

Wert not a merry iest to haue a bout againe Master R. G. with your Poet: call brethren: amongst the which, one learned Hypocrite, that coulde byooke no abuses in the Common-wealth, was so zealous, that he beganne to put an English the Saint into the Legend, for the holinesse of her lyfe: and forgot not so much as her dogge, as Tobies was remembred, that wagged his tayle at the sight of his olde Mistres. This pure Martinist (if he were not worse) had a combat betwene the flesh and the spirite, that he must needes haue a wife, which he cunningly Conny-catcht in this manner.

A peasant tale howe a holy brother, Conny-catcht for a wife.

**F**irst you must vnderstand, that he was a kind of Scholasticall panion, nourst vp onely at Grammer schole, least going to the Uniuersitie, through his nimble witte, too much learning should make him mad. So he had past As in presenti, and was gone a proficient, as farre as Carmen Heroicum: for hee pronounceth his wordes like a byagout, and helde vp his heade like a Halt-horse, and coulde talke against Bishops, and with very mannerly the discipline of the Primatiue Church were restored. Now sye, this Gentleman had espyed (I dare not say about Fleetstreete) a proper maide, who had giuen her by the deceale of her Father, foure hundred pound in money, besides certaine sayre houses in the Citie: to this Wyll goeth this proper Wyke a wooing, naming himselfe to be a Gentleman of Cheshyre, and only sonne and heyre to his Father, who was a man of great reuenues: and to make the matter moze plausible, hee had attyred hys owne brother very orderly in a blewe coate, and made him hys seruingman, who, though hee were eldest, yet to aduance hys younger brother to so good a marriage, was content to lie, cog, and flatter, and to take any seruile paines, to sooth vp the matter: in so much, that when her Father in law (for her mother was married againe, to an honest, vertuous, and substantiall man in Fleetstreete or there about) heard how this young gentleman

## Conny-catching.

Aleman was a Suter to his Daughter in lawe, carefull they should doe well, cald the seruingman aside, which by his outward behauiour seemed an honest and discrete man, & began to question with him, what his master was: of what Parentage: of what possibilitie of lyuing after his fathers decease: and how many Children he had beside him:

This fellowe wel instructed by his holy Brother, without distrust to the man, simply as he thought, said, that hee was the sonne and heire of one Maister &c. dwelling in Cheshire, at the Maner of &c. and that he had a younger brother, but this was heire to all, & reheatst a proper living of some five hundred marks a yeere. The honest man knowing diuers Cheshire Gentlemen of that name, gaue credite to the fellow, and made no further enquirie, but gaue countenance to my young Maister, who by his flattering speeches, had wonne, not onely the Maydes fauour to the full, but also the good will of her Mother, so that the match shortly was made vp, and married they should be forthwith, and then should she, her Father & her Mother, ryde home to his Father in Cheshire, to haue sufficient dowrie appointed.

To be briefe, wedded they were, and bedded they had bene three or foure nights, and yet for all this space shewe, the Father was a little iealous and smoakt him, but durst say nothing, but at last, after the marriage had bene past ouer three or foure dayes, it chaunced that her Father and this Seruingman went abroad, and past through Pauls Church-uarde amongst the Stationers, a Prentise amongst the rest that was a Cheshire man, and knew this counterfet Seruingman and his Brother, as being borne in the same Parish where they Father dwelt, called to him, and sayde. What I. how doth your brother P. howe doth your Father, lyues he still: The fellow answered him all were well, and loath his Brothers wiues Father shoulde heare any thing, made no stay but departed.

This acquaintance naming the fellow by his name, and asking for his Brother, droue the honest Cittizen into a  
great

## The defence of

great maze, & doubted he, his wife & his daughter were made Connyes. Wel, he smothered all vp, as if he had heard nothing, and lette it passe till he had sent the man about necessarie businesse, and then secretly returned againe to the Stationers shoppe, and began to question with the boy, if he knewe the seruingman well, that he cald to him of late. I marry do I sir quoth he, I know both him and his brother P. I can tell you they haue an honest poore man to their father, & though now in his old age, he be scarce able to liue without the help of the parish, yet he is well beloud of all his neighbours. The man hearing this, although it grieved him that he was thus cosned by a pallyard, yet seeing no meanes to amend it, he thought to girde his son pleasantly, & therefore bad diuers of his friends and honest wealthy neighbours to a supper: well, they being at the time appointed come, & all welcome, who must sit at the the words end, but my young Master, and hee very coply, bad them all welcome to his fathers house, they al gaue him reuerent thanks, esteeming him to be a man of worth & worth, As soone as all were set and the meat serued in, and the Gentlemans seruingman stood mannerly waiting on his brothers trencher, at last the goodman of the house smiling sayd: son P. I pray you let your man sit downe, & eate such part with vs as God hath sent vs. Harry quoth Master P. that were well to make my man my companion, he is well enough, let hym sup with his fellowes. Why sir saith he, in fayth be plaine, cal him brother & bid him sit down. Come cosen I quoth he, make not strange, I am sure your brother P. will giue you leaue. At this Mr. P. blush't, & asked his father in law what he ment by those words: & whether he thought his man his brother or no? I by my faith do I son quoth he, & account the no honest man, that wilt deny thy owne brother & thy father, for sir know, I haue learnt your pettegree. Alas daughter quoth he, you are well married, for his father liues of the almes of y<sup>e</sup> parish, and this poore fellowe which hee hath made his slaue, is his eldest brother. At this his wife began to weep, all was dash't, & what she thought God knowes. Her mother cryed out, but all was bootles. Mr. P. confest the truth & his brother sat down at supper, & for all that he had the kench. I pray you was not this a Conny-catcher, Master R. G.

But



## Conny-catching.

But now to be a litle pleasant with you, let me haue your opinion what you deeme of those Amorosos here in England, & about London, that (because the olde prouerbe saith, change of pasture makes fat calves) will haue in every Shire in England a sundry wife, as for an instance your countryman R. B. are not they right Conny-catchers? enter into the nature of them, and see whether your pen had beene better employed in discouering their villanies, then a simple legerde-main at cards. For suppose a man hath but one daughter, and hath no other dowrie but hir beautie and honestie, what a spoile is it for her to light in the hands of such an adulterous and incestuous rascal: had not hir father beene better to haue lost forty shillings at cards, then to haue his daughter so connycatcht and spoyld for euer after? These youths are proper fellows, neuer without good apparell and store of crowns, wel hoist, & of so quaint and fine behaviour, and so eloquent, that they are able to allure a yong gille to folly, especially since they shadowe their villainy with the honest pretence of marriage: for their custome is this. When they come into a Cittie or other place of credite, or sometime in a country vilage as the fortune of their villany leads them, they make inquiry what good marriages are abroad, and on the Sunday make suruey what faire and beautiful maides or widowes are in the parish: then as their licentious lust leades them, whether the eye for fauour, or the eare for riches, so they set downe their rest, and sojourne either there, or thereabouts, hauing money at will, and their companions & sooth by whatsoeuer damnable they shal protest, courting the maid or widow with such faire woords, and sweet promises, that shee is often so set on fire, that neither the report of others, nor the admonition of their friends can draw them from the loue of the Poligamoi, or bel-swagers of the country. And when the wretches haue by the space of a moneth or two satisfied their lust, they waxe weary, and either faine some great iourney for a while to be absent, and so go and visit some other of his wiuers, or els if he meane to giue her the bag, bee selleth whatsoeuer he can, and so leaues her spoyld both of her welth

and honestie, then which there is nothing more pretious to an honest woman. And because you shall see an instance, I wil tel you a pleasant tale perfozmd by our villaines in Wiltshire not long since, I wil conceale the parties names, because I thinke the woman is yet alive.

A pleasant tale of a man that was married to sixteen wiues, & how curteously his last wife intreated him.

**I**N Wiltshire there dwelt a Farmer of indifferent welth, that had but onely one child, and that was a daughter, a mayd of excellent beauty and good behauiour, and so honest in hir conuersation, that the good report of her vertues was well spokē of in all the country, so that what for her good qualities, & sufficient dowry that was like to fall vnto her, shee had many suiters, mens sons of good welth and honest conuersation. But whether this mayd had no minde to wed, or she likt none that made loue to her, or she was afraid to match in hast least shee might repent at leysure, I know not: but she refused all, and kept her still a virgin. But as wee see oftentimes, the coyest maids happen on the coldest marriages, playing lyke the beetle that makes scozne all day of the daintiest flowers, and at night takes his lodging by in a cowsherd. So this maid whom we wil cal Marian, refused many honest and welthy Farmers sonnes, and at last lighted on a match, that for ever after marth her market: for it fel out thus. One of these notable roges, by occupation a taylor, and a fine workeman, a reprobate giuen ouer vtterly to the spoyle of honest maides, & to the deflowring of virgins, hearing as he trauelled abroad of this Marian, did meane to haue a fling at her, and therefore came into the towne where her father dwelt and asked worke. A very honest man of that trade, seeing him a passing proper man, and of a very good and honest countenance, and not meanly apparrelled, saide hee would make tryal of him for a garment or two; and so tooke him into seruice: as soone as hee saue him vse his needle, hee wondered not onely at his workmanship, but at the swiftnesse

of his hand. At last the fellow (whome we wil name William) desired his Maister that hee might vse his sheeres but once for the cutting out of a dublet, which his Maister granted, and he vſed ſo excellently wel, that although his Maister was counted the beſt taylor in Wilſhire, yet he found himſelfe a botcher in reſpect of his new intertaine'd iourney-man, ſo that from that day forward he was made foreman of the ſhop, and ſo pleaſed the gentlemen of that ſhire, that who but William talkt on for a good taylor in that ſhire. Wel, as yong men and maids meet on ſondayes and holydaies, ſo this taylor was paſſing braue, and began to frolike it amongſt the maydes, and to be very liberal, being ful of ſiluer and gold, and for his perſonage a properer man then any was in all the pariſh, and made a kinde of loue far off to this Marian, who ſeeing this William to bee a very handſome man, began ſomewhat to affect him, ſo that in ſhort time ſhe thought wel of his fauors, and there grew ſome loue between them, inſomuch that it came to her fathers ears, who began to ſchoole his daughter for ſuch fooliſh affection towards one ſhe knew not what he was, nor whither he would: but in baine, Marian could not but thinke wel of him, ſo that her father one day ſent for his Maister, and began to queſtion of the diſpoſition of his man. The Maister tolde the Farmer friendly that what he was he knew not, as being a meere ſtranger vnto him: but for his workemanſhippe he was one of the moſt excellent both for needle and ſheeres in England: for his behauiour ſince he came into his houſe, he had behaued himſelf very honeſtly and curteouſly: wel apparell'd he was, and wel mounted, and might for his good qualities ſeeme to bee a good womans fellow. Although this ſomewhat ſatiſfied the father, yet was he loth a taylor ſhould carry away his daughter, & that ſhe ſhould be giuen to lye of a bare occupation, whereas ſhe might haue landed men to her huſbandes, ſo that hee and her friends called her aſide, and perſwaded her from him, but ſhe flatly told them ſhee neuer loued any but him, & ſith it was her firſt loue, ſhe would not now be turned from it, whatſoeuer hap did afterward befall vnto her. Her father that loued her dearly,



seeing no perswasions could draw her from the taylor, left hir to hir owne liberty, and so shee and William agreed together, that in short time they were married, & had a good portion, and set vp shop, & liued together by the space of a quarter of a yere very orderly. At last satisfied with the lust of his new wife, hee thought it good to visite some other of his wiues (for at that instant he had sixteene liue) & made a scuse to his wife and his wiues father to go into Yorkshir. (which was his native cuntry) and visit his friends, and craue somewhat of his father towards household. Although his wife was loth to part from her sweet Wil. yet she must be content, & so well host and provided away he rides for a moneth or two, that was his furthest day, & downe goes he into some other cuntry to sollace himself with some other of his wiues. In this meane while one of his wiues that he had married in or about Canton in Somersetshire, had learnd of his villany, & how many wiues he had, and by long trauel had got a note of their names and dwelling, and the hands and scales of euery parish where he was married, and now by fortune she heard that he had married a wife in Wilshire, not far from Marlborough: thither hies shee with warrants from the Bishop & diuers Iustices to apprehend him, & coming to the towne where he dwelt, very subtilly inquired at her host of his estate, who told hir that he had married a rich Farmers daughter, but now was gone down to his friends in Yorkshir, & would be at home againe within a weeke, for hee had been eight weeks already from home. The woman inquired no further for that time, but the next morning went home to the Farmers house, & desired him to send for his daughter, for she would speak with hir from hir husband: the mā straight did so, & she hearing shee should haue newes from hir Willia, came very hastily. Then the woman said, she was sorry for hir, in that their misfortunes were alike, in being married to such a runnagate as this taylor: for (q. shee) it is not yet a yere and a halfe since he was married to me in Somersetshire. As this went cold to the old mans heart, so strooke it deadly into the mind of Marian, who desiring hir to tell the truth, shee out with hir testimony,

testimony, & shewed them how hee had at that instant sixteene  
 wiues aliue. When they read the certificat, and saw the hands  
 & seales of euery parish, the old man fell a weeping: but suche  
 was the griefe of Marian, that hir sorrow stopt hir teares, and  
 she sat as a woman in a trance, till at last fetching a great sigh  
 she called God to witnes she would be reuenged on him for al  
 his wiues, and would make him a generall example of all such  
 gracelesse runnagates. So she conceald the matter, & placed  
 this hir fellow in misfortune in a kind womans house of hers,  
 so secretly as might be, attending the comming of hir treache-  
 rous husband, who returned within a fortnight, hauing in the  
 space he was absent visited thre or foure of his wiues, & now  
 ment to make a short cut of the matter, and sel all that his new  
 wife had, & to trauel into som other shire, for he had heard how  
 his Somersetshire wife had made inquiry after him in diuers  
 places. Being come home he was wonderfully welcome to  
 Marian, who intertaind him with such curtesies a kind wife  
 could any wates affoord him, only the vse of hir body she deny-  
 ed, saying hir natural diseale was vpon hir: Well to be breefe,  
 a great supper was made, & all hir friends was bidden, and he  
 euery way so welcome as if it had bin the day of his hydal, yea  
 all things was smoothed vp so cunningly, that he suspected no-  
 thing lesse then the reuenge intended against him. As soone as  
 supper was ended, & al had taken their leaue, our taplor would  
 to bed, and his wife with hir owne hands helpt to vnderesse him  
 very louingly, & being laid downe she kist him, & said she would  
 go to hir fathers and come againe straight, bidding him fall a  
 sleepe the whilest: he that was drowlie with trauel & drinking  
 at supper, had no need of great intreaty, for he straight fel into  
 a sound slumber, the whilest she had sent for his other wife, and  
 other hir neighbors disguised, & comming softly into the par-  
 lour where he lay, she turnd vp his clothes at his feet, & tyed  
 his legs fast together with a roape, then waking him, she asked  
 him what reason he had to sleepe so soundly. He new wakt out  
 his sleepe began to stretch himselfe, and ga to his legs with the  
 cord, wher at hee wondring said; How now wife? whats that

hurts my legs? what are my feete bound together? Marian looking on him with looks full of death, made him this answer: I villaine, thy legs are bound, but hadst thou thy iust desert, thy necke had long since been stretcht at the gallowes, but before thou and I part, I wil make thee a iust spectacle vnto the world for thy abhominable trechery: and with that she clapt hir hand fast on the haire of his head, and held him down to the pillow. William diuinen into a wondrous amaze at these words, said trembling: Sweet wife, what sodaine alteration is this? what meane these words wife? Traytor (q. she) I am none of thy wife, neither is this thy wife, and with that she brought hir forth that he was married to in Somersetshire, although thou art married to hir as wel as to me, and hast like a villain soughed the spoyle of fifteene women beside my selfe, & that thou shalt heare by iust certificat, and with that there was read the bedrol of his wiues, where he married them, and where they dwelt. At this he lay mute as in a trance, & onely for answer held vp his hands, and desired them both to be mercifull vnto him, for hee confest all was truth, that he had been a hapnous offendor, and deserued death. Tush saith Marian, but how canst thou make any one of vs amends? If a man kil the father, he may satisfie the blood in the sonne: if a man steale, he may make restitution: but he that robs a woman of hir honesty and virginity, can neuer make any satisfaction: and therefore for all the rest I wil be reuenged. With that his other wife and the women clapt hold on him, & held him fast, while Marian with a sharpe razer cut off his stones, and made him a gelding. I thinke she had little respect where the signe was, or obserued little art for the string, but off they went, and then she cast them in his face, and said: Now lustful whozemaister, go and deceiue other women as thou hast done vs, if thou canst, so they sent in a surgeon to him that they had provided, and away they went. The man lying in great paine of body, and agony of mind, the surgeon looking to his wound, had much adoo to stanch the blood, and alwayes he laughd hartly when he thought on the reuenge, and had a vengeance ou such sow-gelders, as made such large stits: but



but at last he laid a bloud plaister to him, & stopt his bleeding, and to be bzeefe in time heald him, but with much paine. A soon as he was whole, & might go abzoad without danger, he was committed to the gaole, and after some other punishment banished out of Wilshire & Somersetshire for euer after. Thus was this lusty cocke of the game made a capon, and as I heare had little list to marry any more wiues to his dying day.

How like you of this connycatching D. R. G? But because now we haue entred talke of taylozs, let mee haue about with them, for they be mighty connycatchers in sundry kinds. I pray you what Poet hath so many fictions, what Painter so manie fancies, as a tayloz hath fashions, to shew the variety of his art: changing euery week the shape of his apparel into new forms, or els hee is counted a meere botcher. The venetian and the gallogascaine is skale, and the trunkes fop out of vse, the round hose bumbasted close to the bzeach, and rustt aboue the necke with a curle, is now common to euery cullion in the country, & dublets be they neuer so quaintly quilted, yet forsooth þ swain at plough must haue his belly as side as the courtier, that hee may pisse out of a button hole at the least. And all these strange deuises doth the tayloz inuent to make pooze gentlemen Connies: for if they were tyed to one fashion, then still might they know how much veluet to sende to the tayloz, and then would his filtching abate. But to preuent them, if hee haue a French belly, he will haue a Spanish skirt, and an Italian wing, seamed and quartered at the elbows, as if he were a souldado ready to put on an armour of prooffe to fight in Hile-end vnder the bloudy ensigne of the Duke of Shorditch. Thus will the fantasticke tayloz make pooze Gentlemen Connyes, and euer aske moze veluet by a yard and a halfe then the dublet in conscience requires. But herein lyes the least part of they? conny-catching: for those ground taylozs that haue all the right properties of the mysterie, which is to be knauish, the euish, and proud, take this course with courtiers and courtly gentlemen, they find out side, inside, lace, drawing out, & making, & then set down they? parcels in a bill, which they so ouerpyse, that some  
of

of them with very pricking vp of dublets haue fleest yong gentlemen of whole Lordships, & cal you not this cunny-catching M.R.G.? To ble the figure Pleonasmos, *Hisce oculis*, with these eyes I haue seen taylorz prentises sel as much vales in a weeke in cloth of gold, veluet, satten, taffata, and lace, as hath beene worth thirtie shillings, and these eares hath heard them scozn when their vales came but to ten shillings, and yet there were foure prentises in the shop. If the prentises could lurch so mightily, then what did the maister? But you must imagine this was a womans taylor, that could in a gown put seuenteen yards of ell broad taffata, blest be the French sleeues & breach verdingales, that grants them liberty to connycatch so mightily. But this I talke of our London and courtly taylorz: but euen the poore pricklouse the country taylor, that hath scarce any more welch then his thimble, his needle, his pressing iron, & his sheeres, wil filch as wel as the proudest of that trade in England, they wil so snip and snap, that all the reuerſion goes into hell. Now sir, this hell is a place that the taylorz haue vnder their shopbord, where all their stolne shreds is thrust, and I pray you cal you not this pilking and polling, and flat Conny-catching Maister R.G.? But because you may see whether I speake truth or no, Ile tel you a merr yest of a taylor in Dorke not farre from Petergate, done about fourteen yere ago, and thus it fel out.

A pleasant tale of a Taylor, how he conny-catcht a Gentlewoman, and was made himselfe a conny afterwards by his man.

**I**n Dorke there dwelt a womans taylor famous for his art, but noted for his filching, which although he was light fingerd, yet for the excellency of his workmanship, he was much sought to, & kept more iournymen, then any ſine in that Cittie did: & albeit he would haue his share of veluet, satten, or cloth of golde, yet they must finde no fault with him, least hee halfe spoyled theyr garment in the making. Besides he was passing proud, and had as haughtie a looke, as if his father had with the Deuill lookte ouer Lyncolne: his ordinar y dublettes were

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wear Cassata cut in the summer upon a wrought shirt, and his cloake faced afore with velvet, his stockings of the purest granado like, with a French painted boale of the richest billiment lace, a beaver hat curst with velvet, so quaintly as if hee had been some Esparniolo tricke up to go court some quaint Curtesin, inso much that a plaine servingman once meeting him in this attire, going through Rammgate to take aire in y<sup>e</sup> field, thought him at the least some Esquire, and of with his hat and gaue his worship y<sup>e</sup> time of the day, this clawed this Glorioso by the elbow, so that if a Couenne had been by, a pottle of wine should haue been there afterword for a largesse to the simple serving man: but this Homical buffe scruffe, not content to passe away with one worship, began to hold the fellow in prate, and to question whose man he was. The fellow curteously making a low cringe sayd, may it please your worship, I serue such a Gentleman dwelling in such a place, as thus hee answered him, he spied in the gentlemans bosome a needle and a threed, whereupon the fellow simply sayd to him, Sir your worships man in looking this morning to your doublet hath left a needle and a threed on your worships brest, you had best take it off, least some thinke your worship to be a Taylor. The Taylor not thinking the fellow had spoken simply, but frumpet him, made this reply, what latency knowest moche me, what if I be a Taylor, whats that to thee, wert not for shame I would lend thee a box on the eare of thee, the fellow being plaine but peeuish and an old knave, gathering by his own words that he was a Taylor, said, fie so God helpe me I mocke you not, but are you a Taylor, I marry am I quoth he, why then saies the serving man al my caps, hoes, and worships, I did to thy apparel, and therefore maister thanke me, for it was against my wil, but now I know thee farewel good honest pricklouce, and looke not behind you, for if you do, he swindge you in my scabbard of my sword till I can stand over thee, away went Monsieur Magnifico frowning, and the servingman went into the citie laughing, but al this is but to describe the nature of y<sup>e</sup> man, now to the secrets of his Art, al the gentlewomen of y<sup>e</sup> country ride out vpon him, yet could they not part from him, because



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he so quainely fitted their humors, at last it so set out, that a Gentlewoman not far from Ferby Brigg, had a taffata gown to make, and he would haue no lesse at those daies then eleuen els of ell broad taffata, so she bought so much and ready to send it, she said to her husband in hearing of all her seruingmen, what a spight is this, seeing that I must sende alwayes to yonder knaue Taylor, two yards more then is necessary, but how can we mend vs, al the rest are but Butchers in respect of him, and yet nothing grieues me but we can neuer take him with it, and yet I and mine haue stood by while he hath cut my gowne out, a pleasant fellow that was now come to serue her husband, one that was his Clarke & a pretty scholler, answered good mistress giue me leaue to vnderstande your taffata and see it cut out, and if I spy not out his knaueerie laugh at me when I come home, may I praye do quoth his maister & mistresse, but whatsoeuer thou seeest say nothing least he be angry and spoyle my gowne, let me alone mistress quoth he, and so away hee goes to Yorke, and coming to this Taylor found him in his shop, & deliuered him the taffata, why this hee saide, that his mistress had charged him to see it cut out, not that he suspected him, but that els he wold let it lie long by him and take other worke in hand, the Taylor leopitully said he thought, & asked him if he had any speccacles about him, no quoth the fellow my sight is yong enough I neede no glasses, if you do put them on quoth he, and see if you can see me steale a yard of taffata out of your mistres gowne, and so taking his sheeres in hand he cut it out so nimbly that he cut three foze parts to the gowne, and foure side pieces that by computation the felow gett he had Golue two els and a half, but say nothing he durst, as soone as he had done, there came in more Gentlemens men with worke that the Taylor was very busie and regarded not, the seruingman who seeing the Taylors cloake lying loose, lifted it away and carried it home with him to his mistresse house, where he discoursed vnto his maister and his mistresse what he had seene, & how he had stole the Taylors cloake, not to that intent to filch, but to try an experiment vpon him, for maister quoth he, when hee brings home my mistresse gowne, he wil complaine of the losse of his cloake, and then see,

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do you but tel him that I am experienced in Magicke, and can cast a figure, and wil tel him where his cloake is without faile, say but this sir and let me alone, they all agreed, and resolved to trye the wit of their poong man, but leauing him, again to our taylor, who when he had dispatcht his customers, was ready to walk with one of them to the tauerne, and then mist his cloake, searcht all about, but find it he could not, neither could hee tel whom to suspect, so with much griefe he past it ouer, and when he had ended the Gentlewomans gowne, because she was a good customer of his, he himselfe tooke his nagge & rid home withal, welcome hee was to the gentlewoman & hir husband, & the gowne was passing fit, so that it could not be amended, insomuch that the gentlewoman praised it, and highly chaunkte him, Oh mistresse quoth he, though it is a good gowne to you, tis an infortunate gowne to me, for that day your man brought the taffata, I had a cloake stolne that stood mee but one fortnight before in foure pound, and neuer since could I heare any word of it. Truly said the gentleman I am passing sozry for your losse, but that same man that was at your house is passing skilfull in Negromancy, and if any man in England can tell you where your cloake is, my man can, marry quoth he, and I wil giue him a brace of angels for his labour, so the fellow was calde and talke withal, and at his mistresse request he was content to doo it, but he would haue his twenty shillings in hand, & promised if hee told him not where it was, who had it, & caused him to be deliuered to him again, for his two angels he wold giue him ten pounds, vpon this the taylor willingly gaue him the mony, and vp went he into a closet like a learned Clarke, and there was three or foure houres laughing at the taylor, he thinking he had bin al this while at Caurake, at last downe comes the felow with a figure drawne in a paper in his hand & smiling cald for a bible, & straight told the taylor he would tel him who had his cloake, where it was, & helpe him to it again, so he would be swozne on a bible that he would answere to all questions that he demand of him faithfully, the taylor granted & swoze on a bible, then he commanded all should go out but his maister, his mistresse, the taylor, & himself. Then he began thus, wel you haue taken your oath on the holy bible, tel me quoth he, did you not cut three foze parts for my mistresse gowne, at this  
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*Perfect  
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out*  
the taylor blight and began to be in a chafe, & would haue flung out of the doore, but the seruing man said, nay neuer start man, for before thou goest out of this parlour, if thou deniest it, I wil bring the cassata thou stolest into this place, wapt in thine owne cloake: and therfore answered directly to my question, least to your discredit I shew you the trick of a scholer, the taylor halfe afraid, said he did so indeed, & quoth hee, did you not cut foure peeces where you should haue cut but two, yes all is true quoth the taylor, why then as true it is, that to deceiue the deceiuer is no deceit, for as truly as you stole my mistresse cassata, so truly did I steale your cloake and here it is, at this the taylor was amazed, & the Gentleman & his wife laught hartily, & so al was turned to a merriment, the taylor had his cloake againe, the gentlewoman her cassata, and the seruing man twentie shillings, was not this plying and wittie Conny-catching, maister R.C.

Thus haue I proposed to your masties, how there is no estate, trade, occupation, nor myserie, but liues by cony-catching, & that our shift at cardes compared to the rest, is the simplest of all, & yet forsooth, you could bestow pences to write two whole pamphlets against vs poore cony-catchers, thinke maister R.C. it shal not be put by, vntill you graunt vs our request. It is informed vs that you are in hand with a booke called the repentance of a cony-catcher, with a recovery of seuerall villanies, wherein you meane to discourse at full the nature of the stripping law, which is the abuse offered by the keepers of Fleetgate to poore prisoners, and some that belong to the Star Chamber. If you do so, ye shal do not onely a charitable, but a meritorious deed: for the occasion of most mischief, of greatest nipping and foyling, and of all villanies, comes through the excoiting bribery of some consoning and counterseyt keepers and companions, that carry vnlawfull warrants about them to take by men. Tell your worship therfore stand to your word, and set out the discovery of that, All wee of this biting college will rest your bradmen. Other wise looke that I will haue the crew of cony-catchers sweare themselves your professed enemies for euer.

Farewel.

Cutbert Cunny-catcher.

FINIS.



